

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 SPC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 USIA-04 PRS-01 PA-01 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1691

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8570

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT KS

SUBJECT: CHURCH-STATE DIALOGUE REMAINS AT STAND-OFF

REF: SEOUL 8265; SEOUL 8261; SEOUL 8401; SEOUL 8540

SUMMARY. NCC GENERAL SECRETARY REV KIM KWANG SUK TOLD EMBOFF ON DEC 19 THAT FOLLOWING MEETINGS WITH PRIMIN AND DRP LEADERS, CHURCH LEADERS REMAINED OPPOSED TO PARK REGIME, BUT DIVIDED OVER HOW FAR TO GO IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES WITHOUT RISKING BLOODSHED OR INVITING MILITARY DICTATORSHIP. KIM SAID OPEN CHURCH AND STUDENT PROTESTS WOULD CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT MEETING ON MONDAY, DEC 10 WITH PRIME MINISTER KIM JONG PIL, TEN CHRISTIAN LEADERS (FOUR METHODISTS, FIVE PRESBYTERIANS, ONE ANGLICAN) DEMANDED CHANGES OF CONSTITUTION AND SOCIAL ORDER, AND EXPRESSED FEARS AND SUSPICIONS THAT ROKG DESPITE CABINET CHANGES AND RECENT MODERATION WOULD CONTINUE
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REPRESSIVE POLICIES. PRIMIN KIM REPORTEDLY ASKED

DELEGATION TO HAVE PATIENCE AND GIVE HIM CHANCE
TO WORK OUT PROBLEMS.

2. ON TUESDAY, DEC 11 NCC LEADERS LUNCHEDED WITH
DRP LEADERS. CHURCH LEADERS TRIED TO ELICIT
POLICY STATEMENTS FROM DRP REGARDING RESTORATION
OF DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, BUT
PARTY LEADERS REMAINED NON-COMMITTAL. HOWEVER,
REV KIM FELT THAT MEETING SERVED TO GIVE DRP
SOME LEVERAGE IN DISCUSSING WITH ROKG NEED FOR
CHANGES TO HEAD OFF SPREADING DISCONTENT.

3. CHURCH LEADERS, SAID REVEREND KIM, BELIEVE
PRIMIN TO BE SINCERE BUT FEAR THAT HE WILL FAIL
BECAUSE OF THE THREATENING ECONOMIC SITUATION
WHICH IS EXPECTED TO SPUR FURTHER POPULAR DISCONTENT.
HE EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT BY EARLY SPRING WORKERS
WILL BEGIN TO PROTEST AND DEMONSTRATE. CHURCH
LEADERS ARE TORN BETWEEN FEAR OF POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES
OF CONTINUING CHALLENGE TO GOVERNMENT AND A
DETERMINATION TO BRING ABOUT REPLACEMENT OF PARK
BY EITHER PRIMIN OR KIM TAE-CHUNG. KIM SAID THEY
REMAIN DIVIDED ON TACTICS AND HOW TO RESPOND TO
PRIMIN'S EXTENDED HAND GESTURE. THEY ARE CONCERNED
ABOUT HOW FAR THEY CAN GO TO BRING ABOUT POLITICAL
AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WITHOUT RISKING
BLOODSHED OR INVITING MILITARY DICTATORSHIP.

4. KIM SAID NCC PLANS TO STEP UP ITS APPEAL
FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT BOTH IN JAPAN AND US. A KOREAN
DELEGATION LED BY REV KIM AND ACCOMPANIED BY YANG
HO-MIN, CHOSUN ILBO EDITORIAL WRITER, IS TO GO
TO JAPAN FIRST WEEK OF JANUARY TO EXPLAIN CHURCH
POLITICAL ACTION IN KOREA TO JAPANESE CHURCH LEADERS
AND TO OBTAIN THEIR POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT.
NCC IS SIMILARLY RECEIVING STRONG SUPPORT FOR ITS
STRUGGLE FROM AMERICAN CHURCHES AND REV KIM MAY
LEAD SIMILAR DELEGATION TO US IN NEAR FUTURE. IN
THAT CASE HE INDICATED HE WOULD WANT TO CALL ON NEW
ROK AMBASSADOR TO US HAM PYONG CHUN AND STATE
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DEPARTMENT.

5. COMMENT: DURING CONVERSATION KIM WAS ANGLING FOR USG VIEWS
ON CHURCH ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES.
WE ARE TAKING LINE WITH KIM AND OTHERS THAT WE ARE
ENCOURAGED BY GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS AT MODERATION
AND HOPE PRIMIN'S INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE
WITH GOVERNMENT CRITICS WILL SUCCEED.

6. TODAY'S PRESS REPORTS THAT CHRISTIAN LEADER GEORGE
PAIK SENT LETTER ON BEHALF OF 15 SENIOR RELIGIOUS
AND POLITICAL LEADERS (SEOUL 8401) TO PRESIDENT
PARK REQUESTING EARLY MEETING ON NATIONAL SITUATION.
UNDERHILL

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